

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A breakaway signpost connector for attaching a sign support member to an anchor member, said connector comprising:

a shear member having a first end, a second end, and a necked down section between said first and second ends; ~~and~~

a spring surrounding said shear member and supporting said necked-down section, wherein said spring includes an outer diameter; and

a bushing surrounding said shear member and said spring, said bushing supporting said necked-down section and comprising a substantially circular opening extending therethrough, said opening having a diameter substantially equal to said spring outer diameter.

2. (canceled)

3. (canceled)

4. (original) A connector in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said shear member comprises a bolt.

5. (currently amended) ~~A connector in accordance with Claim 4 wherein said bolt further~~ A breakaway signpost connector for attaching a sign support member to an anchor member, said connector comprising:

a shear member having a first end, a second end, and a necked down section between said first and second ends, wherein said shear member comprises at least one flat side extending through said necked-down section; and

a spring surrounding said shear member and supporting said necked-down section.

6. (currently amended) ~~A connector in accordance with Claim 1~~ A breakaway signpost connector for attaching a sign support member to an anchor member, said connector comprising:

a shear member having a first end, a second end, and a necked down section between said first and second ends, wherein said shear member ~~further~~ comprises a shoulder extending from ~~at least~~ one of said first end and said second end; and

a spring surrounding said shear member and supporting said necked-down section.

7. (original) A connector in accordance with Claim 6 wherein said shoulder comprises an annular shoulder having an outer diameter, said spring including an inner diameter, said spring inner diameter greater than said annular shoulder outer diameter.

8. (original) A connector in accordance with Claim 6 wherein said shoulder comprises an annular shoulder having an outer diameter, said spring including an inner diameter, said spring inner diameter substantially equal to said annular shoulder outer diameter.

9. (original) A connector in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said spring comprises a helical spring.

10. (original) A connector in accordance with Claim 6 wherein said annular shoulder comprises a top surface including a plurality of ribs, said top surface configured to engage a support member.

11. (previously presented) A connector in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said necked-down section has a maximum diameter that is smaller in diameter than said first end and said second end.

12. (original) A breakaway sign post assembly comprising:

an anchor member comprising an anchor plate and a ground member, said anchor plate coupled to said ground member, said anchor plate comprising a threaded opening;

a shear bolt comprising a threaded first end, a second end, and a necked-down section, said necked-down section separating said first end and said second end, said first end engaging said anchor plate opening, said second end comprising a shoulder;

a spring surrounding said bolt and said shoulder, said spring contacting said anchor plate; and

a support member contacting said spring, said support member attached to said bolt at said bolt second end.

13. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 further comprising a bushing surrounding said bolt and said shoulder, said bushing contacting said anchor plate and said support member.

14. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 wherein said support member comprises a support plate and a sign support, said support plate coupled to said sign support, said support plate including an aperture, said second end of said bolt extending through said aperture.

15. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 wherein said shoulder further comprises an engagement surface, said engagement surface engaging said support plate.

16. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 15 wherein said engagement surface comprises at least one rib.

17. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 further comprising first and second flanged nuts, said first flanged nut coupling said anchor plate and said bolt, said second flanged nut coupling said support plate and said shoulder.

18. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 wherein said spring is compressed between said anchor plate and said support plate.

19. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 wherein said bolt further comprises at least one flat side extending through said necked-down section.

20. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 wherein said ground member is an elongated, generally square cross-section that includes an opening extending therethrough, a first end, a first end wall, and a first end face, said anchor plate coupled to

said first end wall adjacent said first end and spaced from said first end face such that said anchor plate and said first end wall form a recess within said first end of said ground member.

21. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 20 further comprising a bushing surrounding said bolt and said shoulder, said bushing contacting said anchor plate, said bushing sized and shaped to fit at least partially within said recess.

22. (original) An assembly in accordance with Claim 21 wherein said bushing is generally square-shaped and comprises a substantially circular opening extending therethrough.

23. (previously presented) An assembly in accordance with Claim 12 wherein said necked-down section has a maximum diameter that is smaller in diameter than said first end and said second end.

24. (original) A method for assembling a breakaway signpost, the signpost including an anchor member, a support member, a shear member, a spring, the anchor member including an anchor plate and a ground member, the anchor plate coupled to the ground member and having an opening therethrough, the support member including a support plate and a sign support, the support plate connected to the sign support and having an aperture therethrough, the shear member including a necked-down section between a first end and a second end, the second end comprising a shoulder, said method comprising:

anchoring the ground member;

extending the first end of the shear member through the opening of the anchor plate;

attaching the shear member to the anchor plate;

inserting the spring over the shear member;

inserting the second end of the shear member through the support plate; and

attaching the shear member to the support plate.

25. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 24 wherein the shear member is a bolt and the signpost further includes a flanged nut, attaching the shear member to the anchor plate comprises:

threading the flanged nut onto the first end of the bolt; and

tightening the nut to the anchor plate.

26. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 25 wherein the bolt further includes opposite flat sides extending through the necked-down section, tightening the first flanged nut to the anchor plate comprises:

gripping the flat sides of the necked-down section with a wrench; and

holding the flat sides stationary while rotating the nut.

27. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 24 wherein the shear member is a bolt, the signpost further including a flanged nut, attaching the shear member to the support plate comprises:

threading the flanged nut onto the second end of the bolt; and

tightening the nut to the support plate.

28. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 24 further comprising compressing the spring between the anchor plate and the support plate.

29. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 27 wherein the opening through the anchor plate is threaded, extending the first end of the shear member through the opening further comprises threading the bolt through the threaded opening.

30. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 24 wherein the signpost includes a bushing, said method further comprising:

inserting the bushing over the spring; and

compressing the bushing between the anchor plate and the support plate.

31. (previously presented) An anchor member for installing a sign support member and a breakaway signpost connector that includes a shear bolt and a spring, said anchor member comprising:

a ground member comprising a first end and a first end wall; and

an anchor plate coupled to said ground member at said first end such that said anchor plate and said first end wall form a recess within said first end of said ground member, said recess sized and shaped to at least partially receive the spring such that the spring extends circumferentially within the recess and around a necked down portion of the shear bolt.

32. (original) An anchor member in accordance with Claim 31 wherein said ground member is an elongated, generally square cross-section comprising an opening extending therethrough.

33. (original) An anchor member in accordance with Claim 32 wherein said anchor plate coupled to said first end wall adjacent said first end and spaced from said first end face.

34. (cancelled)

35. (previously presented) An anchor member in accordance with Claim 33 wherein said first end wall at least partially supports the spring.

36. (original) An anchor member in accordance with claim 31 wherein the break away sign post connector includes a bushing, said recess sized and shaped to at least partially receive the bushing, said first end wall at least partially supporting the bushing.